

## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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## NEWS RELEASE



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*Utah's courts are committed to open, fair, and independent justice.*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **UTAH STATE COURTS LAUNCH DIVORCE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN PILOT PROJECT**

**Salt Lake City**—When parents go through a divorce, there are an array of programs available to assist the adults in making the transition, including a mandatory class offered through the Utah State Courts. But what about the children involved in divorce? A gap exists between programs available for adults and those for children of divorcing parents. This gap is the impetus behind a new pilot program being tested by the Utah State Courts.

Beginning September 2005, a Divorce Education for Children class will be available for children 9- to 12-years old whose parents have filed for divorce in Salt Lake County. The class will be presented once each month from September through November 2005 at the Scott M. Matheson Courthouse at 450 South State Street.

The two-hour children's course will be offered at the same time as the mandatory Divorce Education for Parents course. The program's curriculum will provide the children with skills they

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can use at home, such as how to express their feelings to parents. Mental health professionals will teach the children's class with the assistance of state court judges and commissioners. Participation in the children's class is voluntary.

“Children often feel responsible for their parents’ divorce and feel alone as part of divorce proceedings,” said Third District Court Commissioner Michael Evans. “The course is designed to minimize the adverse effects divorce has on children by teaching them coping skills.” Evans stressed that the class is not intended as psychotherapy. The court initiated the pilot project after hearing from parents attending the Divorce Education for Adults class that a children’s program was needed.

In 2004, 12,541 divorce cases were filed in Utah; 38 percent of the cases involved one or more children.

Divorce Education for Children—which is a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Judicial Outreach—developed the pilot program. Subcommittee members include Third District Commissioner Michael S. Evans, chair, Craig Bunnell with the Office of the Guardian ad Litem, Dr. Valerie Hale, Rep. Roz McGee, and Lori Nelson with Dart Adamson & Donovan.

The first children’s program is scheduled on Sept. 24 from 9:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Parents wanting to register their children for the class should call Rebecca Bunderson at (801) 238-7802.

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